BEXLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

EASTER MAGAZINE 2017

THE MUSE

WORLD BOOK DAY

HOUSE MUSIC

TRIPS

REVIEWS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

CREATIVE WRITING

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Thanks for reading the 2017 Easter edition of the BGS School Magazine. Despite it being a short term, the Magazine Team has worked hard to produce a wide range of articles we hope you enjoy. And finally, a big thank goes to our magazine co-ordinator, Mrs Johnson!

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Welcome to the Easter edition of the BGS magazine. My diary tells me that when this is published we will have completed nearly twelve weeks of school since Christmas. Where did that time go and how did we manage to fit so much activity into that relatively short period?

The Spring term flies by as students in the upper school settle to some serious preparation for the examinations ahead of them. We've had two ECM days, four Parents' Evenings and five 'Acceptance Evenings.' (We arranged for groups of external students who have applied to the Sixth Form to come into school and meet our current Sixth Form students and quiz them on what it is really like here at BGS – the staff withdrew to allow them an open discussion under the chairmanship of my Senior Prefects.)

Four overseas residential trips took off over the half term break: a Classics trip to Sicily, the bi-annual Economics and Business trip to the USA, the annual Ski Trip by the PE department, this year to Canada, and a new trip by the History and Politics Department, also to the USA. Soon after half-term, we enjoyed hosting a group of Japanese students from Keio High School, Tokyo, with which we now have an exchange program organised beautifully by Mrs Everett - huge thanks to her and to the BGS host families for such a successful exchange.

We organised 'Streetwise' to come in and give our Year 7 students some sober lessons on road safety and at the other end of the school, the whole of Year 12 visited Greenwich Theatre for a presentation on a similar theme but from the point of view of being a new driver. Road safety remains a significant concern on Danson Lane before and after school. I continue to urge students and their parents to observe the parking and stopping restrictions and where possible to keep their cars beyond the roundabout at one end and the width restriction at the other, well away from the school gates.

The House 'year' ends at Easter and once more the best of the Music, Dance and Drama competitions are about to be showcased and the winner of the House Cup awarded. Participating in House activities continues to bring out the very best in our students, their courage, commitment and cooperation. At the time of writing, it was a week ago that I was helping to judge the Dance competition; alongside all the entries, the winning Prothero entry, an energetic and original exploration of fairy tales, was a celebration of our exceptional student leadership and exemplifies the deep influence of our House system in the school.

Under the leadership of members of the English Department, we narrowly missed first place in the Bexley Public Speaking Competition but finally secured victory in the Poetry Slam with an exceptional team of lower school students. Our school diary is punctuated by PE fixtures bringing home regular successes and our Music and Drama departments have continued to impress audiences. The KS4 Musical Showcase celebrated the talent and hard work of our GCSE Music students; we have been treated to recitals for exam pieces at KS4 and KS5 and the Spring Concert looks set to impress yet again. The A level Theatre Studies and GCSE Drama exam performances this term were as powerful as ever; the Drama department continues to inspire students to create original pieces. Which brings me to the new building: this brand new space is now

plastered and painted and we can finally see its full potential as a teaching space for Drama, a daily assembly venue and, of course, a theatre for our drama productions. We are so excited that we recently decided to try to stage the imminent production of 'The Taming of the Shrew' in this new auditorium, despite the risk of it not quite being finished in time and therefore probably not yet properly equipped with lights or sound!
Meanwhile, having survived the winter in cramped accommodation, the Sixth Form should soon get access to their new private study area downstairs, certainly by the May half term. Over the Easter holiday, the old Sixth Form Centre (SFC) is being converted into a Sixth Form Canteen area (still SFC!), expanding SFC 1 into SFC 3 and re-flooring the whole area. Sixth Form students will be able to buy food and drinks as usual from the main canteen but also have the option of using vending machines in the SFC using the same biometric payment method.
My particular thanks this term go to the teachers, mainly of MFL and History but also of English and Science, for their patience and endurance with the disruption that the building work has inevitably caused. The end and the prize is finally in sight! Thank you to every member of staff for your sustained commitment to our wonderful students through this busy term. And to our students – thank you, keep focused and build on your successes. Happy Easter to all!

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This year's House Music event was one of the most unique the school has ever seen. For the first time in the school's history, the competition was performed entirely without instruments. As such, the students of all the Houses got really creative with "homemade" instruments in place of traditional instruments and choir pieces were performed entirely acapella.

To begin Collins' choir gave a fantastic performance of an Arctic Monkeys medley and a wondrous piece using "found" objects improvised into instruments.

Next came Kirkman with a fantastic and ambitious choral rendition of a Michael Jackson medley, followed by a rhythmic piece of music using both body percussion and vocals in call and response to create interesting rhythms.

Third was Mabbs, who began with their rhythmic piece, which the first piece to include movement. Choreographed by year 13 student, Adam Kelly, it was an incredibly impressive piece, with students of all ages getting involved. Their vocal piece was a six-person Bruno Mars arrangement which was met with thunderous applause by everyone in the Hall.

Wellman were the fourth house to perform and, although appearing a little unrehearsed, their rhythmic cover of "Stand By Me" was still a great piece of music, incorporating students of a wide age-range. Their choral piece, a compilation of the songs "Say My Name" and "Cry Me A River", was incredibly well-performed, with some excellent soloists.

The penultimate House was Prothero, who performed their rhythmic piece first with excellent choreography, making a fantastic piece, not only to listen to, but also to watch. Their choral piece was an arrangement of "Stand By Me", "Lean On Me" and "Somebody To Lean On" and was another wondrous performance.

Finally, Johnson finished off the competition with a fantastically passionate version of “This is Gospel”. They rounded off the show with a performance on perhaps some of the most unique instruments, including a pipe tube created and played by Year 13 student Lewis Watson, as well as buckets played with wooden spoons.

After the highly entertaining conclusion to an incredibly impressive event, the hard job of selecting a winner was given to the panel of judges, Ms Hanington, Mrs Eacott and Mrs Triggs, who ended by ranking the six Houses very closely:

In sixth place, with a very respectable 16/24 points were Wellman, followed by the fifth place, Collins, on 18/24 points. Next was a tie between Johnson and Kirkman on 19/24 points, leaving Mabbs to claim a hard earned second place with 21/24 points. Of course, the only House left is Prothero, who came first with 22/24 points for a well earned victory in this year’s House Music event.

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By the time you read this the end result of the House year will be public, and at present it seems to be pretty close! Kirkman have had a mixed year of results, but a good one in terms of participation and effort. We’ve had great outcomes in Junior and Senior Football, Inter Chess, Junior Badminton, Inter Football, Inter Tennis, Inter and Senior Cookery, a victorious Harvest Box and good solid 3rd places in Drama and Music, which as we all know take up huge amounts of time and effort! In amongst all that we also have gained several Sportsmanship points which is great.
It is as ever the Captains who do all the hard work in running teams and entries, and so I’d like to thank my outgoing Captains (Emma, Chloe, James, Tom, Cobby, Jaime, Emeka and Oyin) for all their hard work and dedication; I always tell you it’s a hard job and then you find out for yourself, but hopefully it’s one of the most rewarding as well! Hopefully the new ones will do just as good a job, and here’s to getting back the Trophy in 2018!

Alice Fisher
Head of Kirkman

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World Book Day hit on the Thursday the 2nd March. Across school a variety of intriguing outfits could be seen from Arthur Dent to Gandalf to Miss Peregrine, whilst activities were going on throughout the day, including a talk to Year 10’s with Nicky Singer who wrote ***6¦vYxd, 3fY¨mf¥)z±*** and ***Mmf 3vY¦u***. During her time with the Year 10’s she spoke about her book ***6¦vYxdË*** which was originally written as a play and then became a novel. Below is an article written by Temi Abodunrin about her experience.

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At Lunch those of us in costume gathered to bask in the glory that is dressing up ′l and also to take a few photos. In the photos, you can see depictions of The Wicked Witches, Mary

Poppins and Bert, Winnie the Pooh, as well as the whole cast of Alice in Wonderland and Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. The ultimate winners, however, were : Jekyll & Hyde (Nathan Bangura and Nathan Fielding in 1st place), Mary Poppins and Bert (Sophie King and Ellie King in 2nd place) and, of course, Gandalf (Tyler Applewhaite 3rd place).

Alongside all of the costume festivities, there was both a Book Quiz and Trail! The book quiz, delivered by none other than Library prefects Adam Dykes and Joseph Hearn, was multiple choice using the handy app: Kahoot. Our Book expert champions have been revealed: Ryan Brockwell-Low and Rohan Dhir. Our 'Identify the Book' Trail Champions are Joseph Hooton and Alaina Leung, who managed to identify all 15 books located around the school. A very special thank you has been passed to Sumi Thapa, Xian Mullard and Yasmin Bekir for their help in organising this competition.

Overall, World Book Day at Bexley Grammar was what you could call a complete success. Whilst we all had a lot of fun during all of our activities, I think the point of the Day was not missed. Books are an incredible escape from the busy and sometimes boring reality of life (there are no dragons or wizards in real life ′l as far as I'm aware), books stimulate the mind and can even increase your emotional intelligence, alongside this they can relieve stress, aid sleep and reduce feelings of loneliness. Books will always be there to help, so next time you're feeling down or up or just average. PICK UP A BOOK-they do not bite (unless it's The Monster Book of Monsters).

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The 2nd March was no ordinary day at Bexley Grammar, students had swapped school

uniforms for costumes as they dressed as their favourite literary characters, from Harry Potter to Mike TV, the range was endless. I myself chose Tintin (without the dog). At 10:55 the school bell rang, not to end lessons, but for students to "drop everything and read". From the PE department to the heights of the History department, students and teachers alike had their noses in their novels, enjoying 15 minutes of peace to enjoy their favourite books.

During academic monitoring, there were quizzes throughout the school to keep the students occupied. Organised by Abisola Bishi and Sapphira McBride, it was a big success with lots of students taking part and enjoying the quiz. Bexley Grammar were lucky enough to welcome Nicky Singer. Nicky took time to work with students in a writer's workshop, imparting her valuable knowledge and skills to the students. The students thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity and are sure to take her advice on board. Around the school there were many cryptic clues of literary favourites for students to solve. Each poster had a picture as a clue to a novel, students had to hunt around the school in search of each poster, before sending in their answers in the hope of winning a prize. There was another competition run by Cathryn Harding: quotes from books were put up around the school and students had to identify from which book the quote came.

At break, the book freecycle took place, led by Mariam Yacoub. The team of Prefects asked for donations from all year groups for unwanted books from home. They got a total of 200 books! They then set up a stall and invited students to pick up a free book. It was a resounding success and a great way to reuse old books. The lower years of the school also took part in a 'Readathon', raising money for improving library facilities in children's hospitals, a truly deserving cause with many students getting involved.

Overall it was a great day and well done to everyone who participated in it, it was filled with many activities in which all year groups were eager to participate.

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I will admit, I didn't have very high expectations for this talk beforehand. I thought it didn't really apply to me, as I'm not eligible to start learning to drive until July (and even then, I probably won't start learning until after university), and that it would be a waste of time, an easy afternoon out of school. Boy was I wrong.

It started off much in the way I expected, with a vaguely funny host aiming to get our attention. After an impromptu dance-off, things got serious. We were introduced to the main safety points they aimed to teach us over the afternoon. They were all very routine: wear a seatbelt, don't speed, don't

look at your phone, etc.
We were then shown a video that we were told would demonstrate some of the safety points. It was all still very normal. When the video ended with a crash and fade-to-black, a paramedic came out on stage, and related the aftermath of a car crash he had been called to. We all sat in shock as he went into detail about the specific injuries.
After another video, a fireman came on stage, and recounted another car crash, once again, going into detail about the injuries and consequences of the crash. We were all shocked once again.
Another video, and a policeman came on stage, and recounted an incident in which he had to tell the parents of a young girl that she had died in the accident. It was harrowing as he described her expression.
Another video, and a man came on stage and recounted in minute detail a crash, and the reactions of the parents of the victim. He then said that he was the father he had just talked about. I, for one, was shocked and a part of me wanted to clap him or hug him (I did neither).
Another person came on stage, and he said he was a survivor of a crash. He described how he went on the slow road to recovery, and how he had to completely rebuild his life after the accident. I think a lot of people were moved by his story.

The afternoon was so much better than I thought it would be. I think using real people and real examples made it all the more powerful and emotive. If I could, I would personally thank Martin and George (the crash survivor and the father of a victim), as their accounts were the most moving and impactful.

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At the very early time of 7:20 in the morning, we all met at Lewisham Station to make the one and a half hour journey to Brunel University in Uxbridge. We got there with plenty of time, and were met with tea, coffee and biscuits. Then we had the introductory talk that outlined the rest of the day. After that we were split into groups (our group managed to stay in one piece), and led to different rooms for the first talk/video.
Our first session was a film called 'Small Heimat', which was about the German sense of having a place to call home. The film focused on the sense of displacement felt by many in the wake of World War Two. The maker of the film, Barbara Knorpp, was quite shocked to hear that we all liked the film.
The second session was a talk on the Marikana Massacre of 2012. It focussed on the role of Anthropology in the real world. It was an eye-opener into the applications of Anthropology, as well as shining a light on the rest of the world. One of the students that went said that they thought it highlighted the ignorance of the rest of the world towards these types of events.
Then, we moved to our third session, another film. This one was titled 'Lifelines', and followed a village in the Himalayas and its relationship with the modern, global world and how they deal with poverty. This film was particularly interesting, as it questioned what is meant by 'poverty', as the people living in the village had a good quality of life, despite their seeming poverty.
We then broke for lunch, which we had in the university canteen. We were all surprised by

the variety and quality of the food, everything from noodles to burritos. After lunch, we had our fourth session. This one was a talk on gender categorisation in South India. I found this enlightening, as it explained the different gender categories around the world.
Finally, we had a talk from one of the Anthropology students at Brunel, in which she talked about the opportunities available at the university, which was also very interesting.
On the journey back, I took a few opinions from my fellow students and Miss Contini. We all agreed that the lecturers were fun and very varied. One said that it was a good opportunity to broaden her knowledge, and another said it had changed her whole view of Anthropology. I realise I have used the word 'interesting' (and variations of it) a lot in this article but that is because I can't think of a better word to sum up the day. The final word goes to Miss Contini "Anthropology should be compulsory," and I couldn't agree more.

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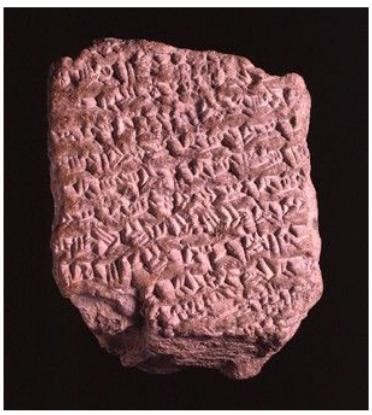

On the 1st February after school, in SFC1, Professor Hugh Bowden, Head of Classics at King's College University, gave a talk about Alexander the Great, famed historical ruler of the Macedon, and about the different historical interpretations and depictions.
The talk was very interesting, and it was made all the more interesting by the evident passion Professor Bowden had for the subject matter. For example, he said that we know the exact date that Alexander the Great died, and this is due to a Babylonian Astronomical Journal (pictured)that says the king died. Also, he said that he was often portrayed in a godlike way, as his friends wanted him remembered as a great ruler. However, the Romans depicted him as a corrupted leader with too much power, as this image was allegorical with the political climate at the time (Marc Antony and Augustus). He greatly increased my knowledge of Alexander the Great, while also improving my critical thinking with historical narratives, and the whole experience was thoroughly enjoyable.
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The Classics trip this year was a five day visit to Sicily, an island just off the southern coast of Italy. Twenty-two students and three teachers attended this trip. We left the school at two forty-five on Tuesday morning.
We arrived in the afternoon and spent the rest of the day exploring Catania. We visited an amphitheatre, it was very large and was surrounded by modern houses, albeit looking slightly run down from the front. Then we split off into smaller groups to explore on our

own.
We then met our coach again, then we drove to our hotel, situated next to the seafront. We subsequently had dinner at our hotel. In Italy, dinner is served in 5 courses: starter, usually Bruschetta, then pasta, then a main course, dessert , then finally fruit salad.

On the second day, we had to wake up very early, and leave the hotel at seven am.
We then drove for a few hours to Agrigento, a town on the southern coast of Sicily. On the way there, we visited the Greek town of Akrae, which had an amphitheatre and catacombs.

After this, we headed for a very large Roman villa with amazing mosaics all across the floor. We spent the majority of the day there.
On the third day, we explored the phenomenal Valley of the Temples. The Valley of the Temples is a valley containing seven temples, some more intact than others. We toured round the Temple of Juno and the Temple of Concordia. The most intact one, that had been converted into a church was spectacular. After this, we visited the Temple of Zeus, a 'ginormous' ruin, bigger than a football field. It was held up by about 30 giant statues of Atlas. The view from the valley was amazing.
Afterwards, we went to a museum that showed us the ruined temple we saw earlier, the Temple of Zeus, reconstructed on a smaller scale. The museum also contain many other archeological finds in the area, such as pottery and statues. We also saw armour, weapons and other items used in an average Greek and Roman life.

On the fourth day we visited Syracuse, home to the largest intact amphitheatre in Sicily and where Aeschylus the Greek playwright debuted some of his plays. The amphitheatre was huge and was surrounded by other ruins. We also saw an altar where over 500 bulls were once sacrificed at the same time.

Then we walked down to a large quarry, where there was a cave called the Ear of Dionysius, where the tyrant Dionysius listened to his slaves in case they were plotting against him. We then visited beautiful Ortygia for lunch. On the way to Syracuse, we visited a fort on top of a hill called Castello Eurialo. It had amazing views of Syracuse.
On the last day, we visited Naxos, a well preserved, although ruined, town. We saw the remains of quite a few Greek buildings while there, such as ancient Greek kilns. The path that we were following eventually looped back around and headed back to the harbour.

After this we visited Taormina and saw a spectacular amphitheatre, with amazing views of Mt Etna (if it isn't cloudy). It is one of the best preserved amphitheatres in Sicily. If you were watching a bad play in this theatre, you could easily be entertained by the view. Then we headed home.

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On Thursday 9th February, Drama A level, IB students and teachers went to go and see Frankenstein at Greenwich Theatre. The play was an adaptation of Mary Shelley's famous Gothic horror novel and was performed by 'Black-eyed Theatre'. Through the use of live music, puppetry and storytelling, Victor Frankenstein was able to tell his story of his creation 'the Monster' to Captain Walton on his ship in the Arctic.

I thoroughly enjoyed this adaptation of the novel as a play, it showed many sides of Frankenstein: his obsession with pursuing nature' secrets and creating life and his true feelings towards his creation. When I found out they would use a puppet to portray the monster, I wasn't overly convinced and expected to be underwhelmed and not scared by it as I was, as a child, watching Boris Karloff in the 1931 film. But I was very wrong. The puppet, a Japanese Bunraku puppet, was controlled by up to three puppeteers at a time who moved it so intricately that it came to life on the very stage. The puppeteers also voiced the monster, overlapping and morphing lines to create an eerie atmosphere but also at times portraying the loneliness and desperation, that the monster had, to have a companion. The play was captivating and kept me engaged throughout; it kept the essence of the novel and added other aspects to create a live display of Frankenstein's adventure into questioning and exploring the deepest depths of science.

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Thank you to the Drama department for arranging the trip!

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In early February, some of us had the exciting opportunity of seeing The Great Gatsby , as an immersive performance by The Guild of Misrule alongside The Immersive Ensemble.

As we entered the venue, we were told to knock at the door, and so the adventure began: we were welcomed by a "shady" looking character who led us to a small bar where we found others equally as confused and excited. After a while of awkward anticipation, a man rose and began to give an enticing speech, (soon we found this man to be Carraway); presently Gatsby appeared and led us into the main extravagant hall, covered in sparkling gold decoration; loud Jazz music began to play; a party ensued. For a while we were free to walk around and explore. I and some others had a conversation with Gatsby, he assured us that we'd never truly been to a party before coming to his. Throughout the night, other characters were introduced and we had endless opportunities to take part in the performance. Mr.Otley himself was led into a hidden room by Buchanan and later emerged to take a starring role. Alongside emotional speeches,

declarations of love and witty banter the show was intertwined with outbreaks of song and dance; often different groups were split so we didn't always know what each character had gone through. This underlying mystery of what went on in the room next door made the whole experience even more interesting and really helped to submerge you into the play. If you ever have the opportunity to see an immersive piece (whether it's The Great Gatsby or not) I highly recommend you take it, even though it can be slightly terrifying to dive into the show yourself.

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The Year 7 Matilda trip was great and packed full of fun.

The trip started with an enjoyable train journey to Charing Cross, where there was a lot of discussion. The train journey seemed to take an eternity to arrive there, as we were all so excited for the trip. At the station, we had an opportunity to go into the shops, particularly one called the Whistle stop shop, so that we could purchase snacks for during the show. After the brief but thrilling stop in the shops we headed to Trafalgar square, where we sat and ate our lunches on the steps and were attacked by quite a few pigeons; however Mr Otley saw them off in a very funny and dramatic way. Finally, the time had arrived to walk to the theatre, as we got closer the excitement and anticipation grew. We arrived at the end of a large queue, full of schoolchildren, lots and lots of children. Eventually, we finally made it to the front and sat in our seats. Looking at the stage, we saw just how amazing it looked, covered almost entirely with words and letters, all lit up with a multitude of coloured lights. The play began and we were all mesmerized, as we followed the plot and sang to the uplifting songs.

After the stunning performance almost

everyone had one of the songs from it stuck in their heads, as we made our journey back on the train. We were quite noisy, as the songs were being sung whole-heartedly all the way back to Welling Station. I still can't decide what my favourite part of the day was, as, being on a fantastic trip to London, to watch a show with my friends made the entire day simply, wonderful!

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In December 2016, Year 8 went on a trip to the Victoria Apollo Theatre in London to see the musical 'Wicked!'. It was such a popular trip that the tickets had sold out in around 15 minutes! I, and a few of my friends who are often involved in the school plays, did not manage to get tickets in time before they were all gone. However, Mr Otley and Miss Gabriel, who were organizing this amazing trip, were kind enough to reserve some extra tickets for a group of us who couldn't get one.

We got the train from Welling station to Victoria station. Before the theatre we went to a nearby park and ate our packed lunches. We were all really excited to watch the performance, especially as many of us had never seen the hit musical before. The ticketing process was really quick and before we knew it, we were inside the outstandingly impressive building and comfortable in our seats.

The view was incredible, even from the side of the stalls, we could see every amazing gesture these talented actors were making. The show was exceptional! Afterwards, we headed towards Victoria station and another train back to Welling. On arrival, there were all of our parents waiting by the platform, ready to take us home. Mr Otley and Miss Gabriel made sure all students were with a parent before leaving the station. We weren't back in Welling late and we were all able to get a good night sleep before the next school day. Overall, it was one of the best trips of my time at Bexley Grammar so far; the afternoon was great fun, especially being able to experience it with my friends!

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On Friday 6th January, A level and IB Drama students visited Goldsmiths University to take part in 'World Theatre' Workshops taught by groups of students studying at the university who were training to teach. The first workshop looked at Commedia Dell'arte, a form of theatre which began in 19th century Italy and is very well known amongst BGS drama students. We focused on the different exaggerated stock characters

and how they are presented: leading with their nose, hips or other body parts told us what their personalities were; a high status and wealthy Pantalone; or a tricky and mischievous Zanni (a bit like harlequin), for example. The language used sounds very much like gibberish. In partners, we performed as two characters having a conversation in complete gibberish or some of us repeated the same word. Even though it seemed very strange not speaking a proper language, somehow the storyline of our scenes began to emerge. One group used the word 'book' as a means of saying 'I'm better than you' and created a very competitive yet amusing atmosphere. There are oh so many times in which you can say the word 'book' until it starts sounding weird and makes you question its pronunciation. This workshop showed us how international Drama is, you can watch and enjoy a whole play on stage without understanding a single word the characters are saying.

Next, we explored Indian theatre called Kathakali and focused on their use of intricate hand gestures to tell stories. We used the story of Rama and Sita. Rama goes hunting and tells his princess Sita not to leave a circle of protection he has made, however she is tricked and kidnapped by a demon and Rama has to save her. We used our hand gestures to help us embody Rama as he hunted and looked for Sita and at each crucial moment we froze to really focus on expressing his emotions; as we acted we heard the backdrop of Indian music of Kathakali and the story being told. As the story progressed we found ourselves in an explosive ending as we split into two groups, one representing Rama and one the demon with which he came face to face and collectively the group arranged themselves to embody the monster but ultimately it was defeated by the other group.

We looked at Japanese Theatre and looked at the stance/pose called the 'Mie' that the Japanese actors take before they get into character. The stance is 'Legs wide, arms up, roll your eyes around whilst rolling your head.' This seemed quite uncomfortable at first but, once we all got into it, we gave it 100% and found it was an effective way to prepare before we get into character. After this, we walked around the space and the students put up different coloured cards that represented an emotion or theme; red for anger, or our favourite, purple for supernatural, which resulted in most of us balancing on one leg and sticking our tongues out. Then we got into two groups and explored the much loved story of Romeo and Juliet. We each chose between an army of the Montagues and Capulets, we had to choose a position and then a war cry to show our dominance.

Finally, we explored West African Theatre which looked at cautionary tales that taught morals. We warmed up with a call and response exercise, making dancing moves up to our part of the song and performing them in the round, which was very enjoyable. Then, we were told the tale of a very smart tortoise who manages to con his friends and not pay the money he owes to them by ultimately making them eat each other. We used the tale as inspiration as, in groups, we had to create a story of our own to teach a lesson by using 5 freeze frames. In my group we taught the lesson 'the memory of a good deed lives on'. Our story centred on two homeless people who were constantly ignored by passers-by until someone gives them food and this act encouraged another person, who had hesitated previously to help them, and this is remembered by everyone.

Finally, we got given a tour by very friendly student ambassadors around the university. We looked at the campus and different buildings used by the students; the stage and the lighting room was very impressive and the facilities were amazing. It was very quiet though, due to the students still being on holiday, so we missed the vibrant and friendly

atmosphere that would usually be there at the university. The workshops were fantastically immersive and a great way to widen our knowledge about world theatre that many of us may have never known about. A big thank you to Mr Otley and Ms Gabriel for arranging the trip and taking us.

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In October of 2016 our team (In Time) consisting of Shyon, Ifeoluwa, Seyi and Daniella took part in the quarter finals of the IFS Student Investor Challenge, where we were against 10,000 teams across the country. We then progressed to the semi-finals, in which the top 500 hundred teams competed, where we had to predict the prices of certain stocks by the end of the week over a period of 4 weeks. We had great success and managed to place within the top 8 in the country, despite the odds, qualifying for the National Final. This will take place in May with the Grand Prize of an all expenses paid trip to America.. wish us luck!

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Last night the Young Enterprise team competed against 6 other teams at the South East London finals of the Company Competition. They prepared a trade stand, business report, were interviewed by judges and gave a presentation to around 100 people. The 5 representatives from the team did a fantastic job in all areas and scooped prizes for Best Report in Bexley, Best Presentation, Best Company in Bexley and Best Overall Company in South East London. They are now through to the East London Finals on 4th May.

Congratulations to the competing members, who were: Jack Dalton, Shyon Gredley, Tyreece Jacobs, Swechha Kansakar & Sam Co.

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There is something spooky about Bexley Grammar School at 4am. All the windows are dark, all the classrooms are empty, it's still in the way a school shouldn't be. This seemed to only add to the atmosphere as the forty of us gathered in the canteen extension, all tired, but excited, carrying suitcases and trying to say goodbye to our parents as casually as possible. At about 5 we packed onto a coach and set off for the airport. No one was saying much, but I think everyone felt the anticipation. We soon boarded the plane – the fanciest plane I've ever been on, I think everyone let out a 'Wow!' at some point, or maybe that was just Mr Brown over and over – and slept most of the journey. I don't think we could quite believe it when we landed. Most of us had never been to the US before. We had all seen it on the big screen, but to actually be there ´l There were collective glances of 'did you hear that?' the first few

times we encountered real life Americans and their iconic accents. From the airport in Washington we took a coach to the hotel: riding through the city, seeing the tall buildings and highways, I remember being a bit surprised at how depressing it looked. It was oddly dark, like a gloom hung over the city. Stepping off the coach, I realised the windows were tinted. The place was, in fact, bright and lively, big, grey and industrial, but happy. And we were happy too, all of us, much less quiet than earlier. We dropped our things off at the hotel and took a walk, then the metro, to Chinatown. Perhaps having read too many romanticised novels, I was very excited to get the metro, and it didn't disappoint. Nor did Chinatown. Mr Joe gathered us in for a brief talk, and then told us to explore and meet him back at the station at ten. We circled the block once, all observing, seeing the place in the magically detached way only tourists can. We all agreed it was so similar but so different. There was a basketball game just starting, so the streets were lively with vendors selling tickets and we enjoyed hearing them shout over and over. We stopped to eat at a pizza place where you could order about ten different flavours of Coca-Cola, or buy fizzy drinks none of us had heard of ('is it really called mellow yellow?'). Then we met back up with Mr Joe at ten and headed back to the hotel.

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One of the highlights of our Washington D.C. visit was the Capitol Tour; no building in Washington, except perhaps the White House, evokes as much emotion and national pride for Americans. The architecture and masses of artwork and state statues inside the Capitol building were enthralling and the area had some sense of community. Opposite the road we were welcomed with a peaceful protest from "Pro-choice" supporters, where many of us got to talk about the current political atmosphere present in America since Trump became President. We spent our day time exploring the numerous galleries and museums the Capitol had to offer, finishing our visits at the Washington Monument before stopping for a late lunch at the National Mall for Mexican/Five Guys. Later on in the day, we walked from the World War 2 memorial to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, followed by the famous Abraham Lincoln statue and then back to the hotel for free time!

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After a delicious breakfast of fatty streaky bacon and toast, we got onto a coach and headed for New York, hitting Philadelphia on the way. We stopped first at the Rocky Steps, and all admired the misty view, before heading to the Liberty Bell, which was surprisingly quite small. We then carried on to New York, all of us chatting excitedly on the coach. As we emerged from a tunnel into the city for the first time, 'NY State of Mind Part 2' ('Neewww Yorkkkkk!') was played through the coach speakers, and we were all appropriately dazzled. The tall buildings and lights really were incredible. We stopped off at the hotel to drop off our things before being given six hours free time to explore the city. My group went to Times Square first, where we found it hard to hold a conversation due to all the traffic and noise and advertisements. It was busier than London, and much brighter, and we all watched the huge flickering billboards in a daze. We went to Five Guys to get

something to eat – the burgers there are so good, and because of America's free refill system we sneakily shared two drinks between the, appropriately, five of us. Then in the early evening we headed to a snowy Central Park to throw snowballs and build a snowman, who we then picked up and pushed off an iconic bridge. It was really something to see, the snow and the huge buildings looming out of the mist beyond the park walls. We stood there watching it for a while, all happy to be together in such a new exciting place. After a few hours of trudging knee deep through the snow we headed back to the hotel, where we sat looking out on the New York street listening to some jazz, enjoying living a cliché.

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Continuing with the walking theme, we started our first full day with breakfast at Applebee's followed by a walk in the blistering cold to Greenwich village where we had to stop off at a local Starbucks to defrost before continuing our journey to the High Line, a public park built on a historic freight rail elevated above the streets on Manhattan's West Side. The Highline was a personal favourite of mine as it offered an alternative perspective of the city whist showcasing art works and sculptures which line the route. We stopped off for a lunch break at Chelsea Market, an enclosed urban food court/quirky shopping mall where we were surrounded by the warm glow of fairy lights and almost street food style taco bars. From then on we were granted free time which we spent on numerous different activities with friends, exploring central park, taking the metro to another part of the city´I you name it. At 6pm we met back at the hotel to start our walk to the Empire State building. The views at night were amazing!

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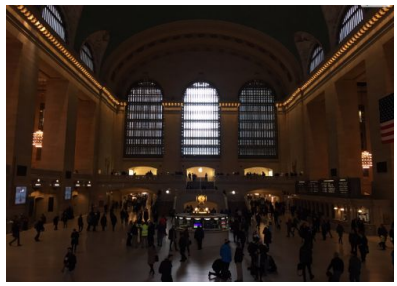
Luckily when we were in New York, everyone agreed that walking was the best way of seeing the most possible of New York.



We took a long walk down the length of Manhattan, and eventually arrived at the extraterritorial site of the UN Headquarters. After rigorous security checks, we were inside the UN building and had a look at the various exhibitions, waiting for our tour guides. We split into two groups, and then were lucky enough to sit in the General Assembly hall, as well as walking (very quietly) through a meeting which was in progress about various environmental issues. This was a very enjoyable experience, as it felt like a real behind the scenes tour after having seen pictures and news reports from the building itself. After our tour, the teachers decided to hand over the map and guiding responsibilities to the students. We were successfully guided to Mr Joe's favourite lunch destination, and stopped at Panda Express for an hour to fill up on Kung Pao chicken and fortune cookies. We then took a walk back up through Manhattan, briefly looking at the Chrysler building, the Rockefeller centre and Trump Tower. Once reaching Trump Tower, we were extremely close to Central Park. Here, we all split up to explore the frozen lakes and attempt snowball fights with the icy snow that was left around the park. Some people hired bikes to cycle around the park and others chose to have a short look around but were quickly drawn back to 5th Avenue and all the shops it had to offer. That evening we had free time again, leaving us free to go and try all the wonderful places we had heard

about.

Wednesday 15th - Ground Zero Tour, Finance Workshop, Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island, Basketball:
Technically, this was our last full day in NYC so we decided to make the most of it. We were up early so we were able to travel to the Ferry Terminal and take the ferry over to Liberty Island, home to the Statue of Liberty. From there we hopped over to Ellis Island which was an immigration gateway to the United states from 1892 to 1954. This experience was eye opening as you were able to explore the actual immigration hall and look through numerous documents of people who had crossed the border years before. Once back on the mainland we carried on our day with a finance workshop on Wall Street and an informative and insightful guided walk to the Ground Zero Memorial, the former World Trade Centre site after the September 11 attacks. In the evening we took a walk across Brooklyn Bridge where we watched the sunset before heading to Grimaldi's Pizzeria for dinner. Afterwards, the half of the students who managed to get basketball tickets continued their evening watching the Brooklyn Nets vs Milwaukee Bucks at the Barclays Centre which was a close 129-125 score to Bucks. The atmosphere was incredible and was definitely a worthwhile opportunity whilst in the area.

Thursday 16th - Shopping in NYC & Flight: (Friday 17th- Arrived Home)
On our last day in New York, we took full advantage of the morning that we had left. Waking up early for breakfast, we filled up as much as we could to fuel our day of shopping until the last minute! We set off at about 9am and had to return back to the hotel at around 2pm, so that we could catch our coach to JFK Airport. Various groups did different things that they wanted to in the last bit of time that we had, for example, some of us visited shops that we had already fallen in love with earlier on the trip, to ensure we spent the last of our dollars. We also made the most of the food in New York, making sure we could try something authentic one last time! Once we were all back and on the coach ready to leave, we also presented a gift to Mr Joe and said a thanks to all of the teachers for arranging the trip. All of us agreed that it was easily the best trip we had been on, thanks to the teachers making sure every day was packed full of activities and free time. None of us wanted to leave!
Thanks must go to all the teachers involved in running this trip -Mr Joe, Mr Deliss, Ms Pearman and Ms Wood - and a special mention for the navigation skills of Mr Deliss.

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Recently, the students of Year 8 took part in a public speaking competition, of which there was only one winner.
For this competition, every student was given the task of producing a 3 minute long speech of a chosen topic. These topics, which were either chosen from a list provided by their English teacher, or from completely their own choice, ranged from feminism and the battle of the sexes, to things like the importance of social media, and how being a teenager feels like 'no man's land'. We were to structure them well, think about how to involve the audience, and to practice, practice, practice. And, although some more than others, we put great effort into the task at hand.

The first stage of the competition was in our classes. Here, we all took it in turns during our English lessons to present our speeches to the class. One by one, we would go up, talk, sit down, and then let the next person present theirs. Each speech would be rewarded with a

clap from the class, and a corresponding grade from the teacher. And, once all the speeches had been presented, two winners were elected by the class – 12 in total in the year group. These 12 winners, myself included, then went on to the second stage: a final in front of the whole year group, Mr Elphick, Miss Wood, and Mr Crawford.

During the space between the 'qualifiers' and the finals, we were able to work on our speeches even more. This allowed us to respond to certain feedback, perfect them, and practice presenting our speeches either to ourselves, or other people. We all wanted to win. However, as nervous yet excited as we were, soon enough, the day arrived.

On the day, as in our classes, we took it in turns to speak. One by one, we would go up, and present them to the judges, with all of our friends and classmates in the audience. Speech after speech, those who were later to go got more and more nervous as they wondered if their speech was good enough, in comparison to those who had set an example. I was 5th to go – very happy that I didn't have to go first or last! And, once everyone had had their turn, the judges went off to make their decision. Who was going to win?

Despite how good everyone's speeches were, there could only be one winner; that, to my great surprise was me. This was rather ironic, in view of the fact that my speech had been about the 'significance of taking part, whether you win or lose'! However, I wasn't ¨mY¨ devastated at the turnout of results!

Even though not all of us won, we all got many things out of taking part. We were able to develop and practise good speaking skills, take part in a big competition, and maybe speak passionately about something we felt strongly about. And, as my speech goes, 'we experienced and learnt things that, hadn't we took part, we never would have'. I thoroughly enjoyed the competition.

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"We stand here, united." I think this quote from one of the two poems performed on Friday 10th March at the Bexley Poetry Slam (hosted in Bexleyheath library by the Spine Festival) accurately describes the six members of the team, who led Bexley Grammar School to victory after several weeks of impromptu lunchtime and after school rehearsals, held by Miss Gabriel of the English department.

The competition was divided into two rounds: one being set on the topic of "Past, Present and Future," which Chloe Adebiyi, Fathia Alade (both of 9AWS) and Tallulah Price-Toplis (8CPB) depicted outstandingly well, through using the poignant and relevant subject of the progression of racial acceptance throughout time, as well as the hope we must hold for the years to come. Secondly, came the Free Choice category, in which Eloise Perry (7C), Olwen Evans (8CPB) and Yingfei Chen (9AWS) performed a piece based on the concept of a guiding light being found through the personification of a lighthouse; it used emotional figurative language.

The process was excellent. Apart from being able to write what we loved, unfiltered, we were also able to share it

with people who wanted to listen. We learnt how to make poetry accessible for the ear and how to work in a cohesive team, whilst making friends with people in school that we normally wouldn't talk to. We got to take a moment out of our day and concentrate on whatever thoughts or feelings we had, and channel it into our work, and it was incredibly rewarding to find that our hard work had led us to success out of eight schools in Bexley, Greenwich and Dartford. Miss Gabriel, thank you for being our guiding light.

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On Tuesday 21st February, I and three other Year 12 students competed in this year's Bexley Public Speaking competition. After a quick run through in KFC (to a less enthusiastic audience) to try and settle our nerves, Kitty Munro, Jack Dalton, Alex Sutcliffe and I made our way to the Bexley Civic buildings in Bexleyheath. The competition was scheduled to be in November, but had to be postponed (which was fortunate for us, as we were certainly not prepared!) We almost forgot about it completely, until the time came around again to start writing the speech, which we all did together. Although we only had a couple of weeks to prepare and a matter of days to learn it, we worked hard and were as prepared as we could be when we arrived at the civic buildings.

When we entered, we could spot a couple of the other teams, as there were only three other schools competing this year. By this point, any excitement we had started to transform into fear, and although we tried to keep a calm façade in front of the other schools, we were all secretly nervous. We were the first school to deliver out speech, which made it slightly more daunting, and as the Deputy Mayor and other judges entered we knew it was time to focus. Our speech title was read out, and we tried to walk to the front of the audience as confidently as possible with Alex, our reserve, staying in his seat and giving us moral support. Jack gave the first 4 minutes of the speech, with me taking the 5-minute section and Kitty the final 3-minute section. The theme for the evening was hospitality (as the event was kindly being sponsored by the Mariott hotel), and I think it is fair to say we chose a pretty bold topic, 'Hospitality in an inhospitable age: is everything to your satisfaction?' – bravely (or over-ambitiously, whatever way you look at it) deciding to cover Trump and Brexit. Overall, I think it went very well, with hardly any

mistakes, and Jack managed to answer the question “why do you think Trump was elected” from the audience confidently too.

The speeches given by Welling, Chis and Sid and Bexleyheath Academy were also brilliant, and the other students were incredibly friendly, as we all spoke to each other, along with members of the council and other teachers whilst waiting for the judges to announce the results (with some sandwiches and hot drinks available too, which was very ‘hospitable’ of them). However, I think we all knew that BA, who had given their speech last, were likely to win, and they deserved to as it was fantastic and well delivered. So, after everyone had been presented with a certificate, when it was announced that we were the runners up (BA did come first) we were very proud. I think it’s fair to say that we felt a bit of pressure as BGS have won the competition for the past 2 years, but after such a hard and close competition, we were pleased with the results and it was a lovely evening – I would highly recommend it to any of the current Year 11s, especially those looking to improve their confidence in public speaking.

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Let me start off by thanking Mr. Goodall, Mr. Martin, Mrs. Scott and everyone else who made the America trip possible, because it was, without a doubt, the best school trip I have ever been on. Sorry Geography Department, but Iceland can't hold a candle to this week-long feast of culture and education.

The trip started, as any good trip does, with an eight hour flight across the globe, which afforded us an opportunity to watch some quality American films. And Star Wars Episode One. That night, we reached Washington, DC, and, as the coach passed such landmarks as the Washington Monument and the Capitol Building, it really felt as if we had stepped into an episode of The West Wing. That evening, we got to the hotel, which had a shop, a gym and an overabundance of BGS Business and Economics students ordering food.
On our momentous second day, we got an up close look at the Capitol Building, which houses the Senate and Congress. The building also connects to the Library of Congress, which features stunning architecture and art via underground tunnels, creating a weird sensation when you leave from a building you did not enter. Lunch, for me at least, consisted of two slices of pizza as big as my head, and a heaping of regret for dessert. We

then followed up lunch with a three hour walking tour of Washington, during which we went to the Washington Monument, which pierces the skyline at a height of 169m, and the Reflecting Pool, where we got some nice photos. We also briefly stopped off at the White House, but, unfortunately, “good guy” President Trump was away on holiday.

The third day kicked off with a visit to National Museum of African American History and Culture, which featured a range of extensive exhibits on African American musicians, athletes, actors, activists and more. But most importantly and surprisingly, it had Space Jam, the 1996 live-action/animation hybrid film starring Michael Jordan and Bugs Bunny that has a score of 37% on Rotten Tomatoes. After that, we got to see the Lincoln Memorial, as well as the Korean and Vietnam War Memorials to either side. The war memorials were touching and awe-inspiring, while Big Linc’s Seat By The Pool was a massive summation of everything America stands for (or depending on your view of America's current state, is supposed to stand for). That evening, another memorial should have been erected for the utter massacre committed by one Alfie Jack Cromarty in the game of bowling, who won with a titanic 105 points, decimating even the second and third place bowlers (Josh Dixon and Gemma Thomson with a measly 85 and 80 points, respectively). Another fierce rival was Emrys Lukas-Brown, who managed, in only the first six rounds, to earn a staggering 0 points. Incredible.

Day four largely consisted of travelling from Washington DC to New York by way of Philadelphia, but was still jam-packed with interesting landmarks and visits. The day started with a trip to the Pentagon, which honestly seemed more like a really exclusive country club from what we were shown, but I suppose they didn't exactly want to give a school group access to all of the U.S. Department of Defense’s secrets. Afterwards, we hit the road to Philadelphia, home of the Liberty Bell, Philly Cheese Steaks and the Rocky Steps, named for their appearance in the 1978 Sylvester Stallone film ***Kzbu±***. After a run up the steps, we drove for a couple more hours and arrived in the city that never sleeps: New York. And as we walked into Times Square, it was easy to tell why it doesn't sleep: it probably can't seeing as it's so darn bright, thanks to the glow of about a thousand billboards, which illuminate the city to near-daylight levels.

It was only really when the sun came up on our fifth day in America that I could really appreciate the grandeur and size of New York City. I mean, London has skyscrapers, but nothing like America's gargantuan behemoths, that require you to almost break your neck to see anywhere near the top of them. Just being in New York felt fantastic: if Washington was like stepping into The West Wing, then NYC was like stepping into any procedural or cop show ever (Elementary, Forever, Limitless -the show that is). That day, we had in store for us a trip on the Staten Island Ferry to Liberty Island, where we got to see the Statue of Liberty herself. Next on our romantic Valentine's Day itinerary was a trip to the 9/11 Memorial Museum. The museum had an even more solemn atmosphere than the last three war memorials combined. It's hardly surprising, considering it was the largest loss of life due to a foreign attack on American soil in recorded history. Between the silence in the museum and my phone's loudest shutter sound, taking a photo was a really awkward experience. That evening we had a wander around Chinatown and Little Italy, before a night-time trip to the Empire State Building. Seeing the views from one of the tallest buildings in the world was breathtaking, although I do regret not taking the opportunity to press every button in the elevator and get off at the next floor (à la Elf).

On our last full day, we tried to take in everything else New York had to offer,

including visiting the United Nations, Grand Central Station, Macy's and Trump Tower. Starting at the beginning, the UN was full of art from all around the world, as well as a heck of a lot of massive meeting rooms. The displays of art were sights to behold, but in my opinion, it could not trump Grand Central Station, which more than lived up to its name. The station was chockablock, with people sightseeing, dining and running for trains. The massive flag and ceiling mural were also, well, not sights to behold, as I've already used that phrase, but pretty dang amazing. We then got to walk around Macy's, which had clothes and the like. Not really my thing, but this did afford me the opportunity to stock up on Mike and Ikes (delicious and underappreciated jellybean-like sweets that are very rare over here). That evening, we got to head on down to Central Park, and although there was a surprising lack of coffee shops, there was a massive ice rink for us to skate on (the same ice rink from =nwn¨vf¦¦ -the film that is). Mr. Goodall was a born natural and swept the competition away on his first ever attempt at ice skating. We followed the skating up with a brief walk past Trump Tower, before heading back to the hotel, where a games night was on the cards. Or it would have been, if the host, master bowler and most experienced card player, Emrys Lukas-Brown, had not fallen asleep. Instead, we tried a couple of card games and then put on Ferris Bueller's Day Off.

The final day was one of shopping and a sense of impending doom. After a good few hours roaming free in New York, we said goodbye to city and arrived at the airport. The flight back was an overnight flight, which would've been great if I could sleep, but oh well: jetlag is an experience too. But overall, I hope I've not neglected anything in this article, about a truly fantastic trip.

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Dear Mr Khan,

RE: Oliver Cromwell's Statue

My name is Sam, and I am a student at Bexley Grammar School in Welling. I am writing to you on the subject of Oliver Cromwell – particularly about his statue (constructed in 1899) outside the Houses of Parliament, and whether he deserves it, considering his deeds. Currently, in History, we are studying Oliver Cromwell, and what he did during his life; it has certainly caused me to rethink my opinion of him. There are two sides: the first is that Cromwell was a hero, and deserves to keep his statue; the other that he was a villain, and doesn't deserve his statue. Within this letter, I shall cover both views in more detail.

The first opinion, as previously mentioned, is that Cromwell was a hero and deserves his statue. The first piece of evidence is that Cromwell was a good person is when he said: "I did not call myself to be the ruler of England ´l I just tried to do right, for God and for the people." The fact that he refused Kingship, one of the most powerful positions in the country, shows that he was a noble person, and the fact that he says that he wanted to do the right thing proves that he is a good person. However, Cromwell could have been saying this just to look like a hero, and not have really meant it, or maybe whoever documented that Cromwell said this was a supporter of him, and made up something to make Cromwell look like a hero. No-one would be able to prove that Cromwell had said anything else.

The next piece of evidence is that a Bristol Baptist wrote that "[t]he days of Oliver were marvellous days of prosperity, freedom and peace." This suggests that the way Oliver Cromwell ruled England was a kind way and that he turned England into a perfect country.

Also, this was said in 1685, after Cromwell died, so could have been an act of defiance against the monarchy, as the Bristol Baptist had nothing to gain (Cromwell was dead so they couldn't get in his 'good books' now – he must genuinely mean what he said). However, this is only the word of one person, so we cannot rely on this evidence to be true. Furthermore, this person was a Puritan religious leader, and the fact that Cromwell was Puritan himself makes this source unreliable, as the Bristol Baptist could be biased. The last two arguments against this evidence also show that this source is potentially not a fair representation about how everyone under Cromwell's rule felt – lots could have been treated badly for various reasons, but perhaps this religious leader happened to be better off – just because he was doesn't mean everyone was.

The third piece of evidence could be considered to fit into both categories. Cromwell said: "I tell you, we will cut off his head with the crown upon it!" This shows that Cromwell was a hero, as he wanted dead the person who turned the subjects of England against each other. The King at the time, Charles I, initiated a Civil War which raged from 1642 to 1648, and it is estimated that around 100,000 Britons died during it (according to Neil Tonge, Historian, in 1992) (the population was roughly 5 million at the time). The fact that a King was the cause of the death of 100,000 of his subjects was considered treason against England, and for this reason, Cromwell was right that the King should have to pay for what he did, with his life. However, we cannot be sure exactly how many people died, especially when the war ended over 350 years ago, so we can't tell if 100,000 people really did die; furthermore, this evidence could also support the other view, that Cromwell was a villain (see the next paragraph for more about that).

The other opinion, that Cromwell was a villain and doesn't deserve his statue outside the Houses of Parliament, is supported by the following evidence. The first piece of evidence picks up where the last paragraph left off (the one about Cromwell wanting Charles I dead). Whilst the previous paragraph viewed this piece of evidence in a positive way, this paragraph views it in a negative. Cromwell wanted someone dead, and wanting someone dead is a very evil thing. Also, lots of people didn't want the King dead, as they saw him as God on Earth, and were afraid that God's wrath would descend upon them if they killed a King – no King had ever been trialled and found guilty, and then executed before! In this way, Cromwell didn't listen to the people of England and their views, and ignoring the views of the people who your decisions are affecting is not the makings of a good leader, and this shows him as a man who just wanted his own way, and didn't care what anyone else thought – not a trait of a hero.

The next piece of evidence shows how cruel and appalling some of Cromwell's actions were. An eyewitness at a battle against Ireland, led by Cromwell, said that "[e]ach of the attackers [Cromwell's men] picked up a child and used it as a shield to keep themselves from being shot. After they had killed all in the Church, they went into the vaults underneath where all the women had hid themselves." The fact that Cromwell allowed his men to use innocent children to protect themselves from innocent people just trying to defend their home, and maybe even instructed them to do so, shows just how cruel Cromwell was. He saw these people as inanimate objects used to take shelter behind. Furthermore, the fact that Cromwell didn't take any prisoners and just killed everyone in the Church shows that he was utterly brutal and relentless. He and his men went down to the vaults where all the women were hiding to show their power – almost certainly just for fun. The women posed no threat, so it seems clear that Cromwell was trying to exterminate the Irish, or at least a significant portion of the population in order to get the rest under control (we can assume that the women were

also slaughtered, as the evidence says that ALL people in the Church were killed – the vault was part of the Church). Also, some background information about the attack reveals that Cromwell took 12,000 men to attack Ireland. As Ireland is so much smaller than England, and doesn't have so much power, they would be easy to defeat – some places which were attacked were utterly defenceless. It wasn't a war, it was a slaughter. How could you call a man like this a hero? However, this account was written by Thomas Wood, after Cromwell had died, during the reign of Charles II. Perhaps he was biased because he felt that he had something to gain by proving his loyalty to the King, and to show that he disliked Cromwell. As the King hated Cromwell, Wood would be favoured by the King for providing evidence against Cromwell, to prove the people who still supported Cromwell and the Parliamentarians that being on the side of the King was the correct side to choose. If Wood wrote this without bias, why did he write it at all. If he desperately wanted to get his view across, surely he would have written this when Cromwell was still in power, and if it wasn't that important, why bother at all, unless there was something in it for him (Wood) in some way. Also, this was written in 1663, so Wood may have forgotten some of the details, and might be writing what he can remember seeing, not the whole thing. Perhaps his brain was incorrectly filling gaps so he thought he was writing the truth but he wasn't.

The next piece of evidence is that an Irish writer wrote, in a song called the English Heart Song: "**6®f affx d¥fYwnxl zk Y ¨nwf ¯mfx Ù Mmf .xlvn¦m Y¥f ¦nbu ¨z dfY¨m zk =Yaz©¥Ë !xd Mz¥n¦ Ù !xd ¦¢n¨©¢zx ¨mf xYwf Avn®f¥ *¥zw¯ fw**".

This shows that Oliver Cromwell wasn't a hero, as he wasn't kind to everyone, as clearly the Irish hated him. This isn't really a surprise when you consider that the previous piece of evidence was about Cromwell fighting and killing the Irish. However, this was written in 2008, so is a secondary source, and while it may be able to give us an idea of what some Irish people might have thought, Morrissey, the writer, was not alive in the 17th Century, so can't know exactly what happened. He can only rely on what other sources show, and his own imagination. Also, he was known to be critical of English rulers during his career, so he might just be making this up to add another leader's name to the list of leaders he's criticised. Yet another piece of evidence, a painting this time, depicts Oliver Cromwell working with the devil. This shows that people at the time disliked Cromwell, and thought him a villain, and there's nothing more villainous than working with the devil. However, this was painted in 1660, after Cromwell died, and if people hated Cromwell so much, why did they wait until after he died to ruin his name. If it was so important for them to share their views about Cromwell, why didn't they do so when he was in power? They didn't, so why did they bother at all? Though this brings around something else which supports Cromwell being evil – the painter wouldn't have made his artwork based on an unpopular subject, so it is reasonable to assume that dislike for Cromwell was common. An artist wouldn't make much money from an unpopular painting. The painter may have waited until after Cromwell died to avoid being executed or accused of treason by Cromwell – a very sensible plan.

The final piece of evidence is a quote from a modern historian: "Pointless enjoyment was frowned upon. Cromwell shut many inns and theatres were all closed down. Most sports were banned. Boys caught playing football on a Sunday could be whipped as a punishment and Christmas was cancelled." This was unpopular because Cromwell was essentially saying: "more work and less play". Cromwell did this because he was Puritan, and a Puritan belief is that working hard gets you to heaven. He didn't listen to the people who didn't want to adopt this Puritan belief, and a hero would surely never ignore anyone who a decision

they made could concern. He forced people to change because of what he believed in. Cromwell was forcing people to change their religion, but not in so many words.

To conclude, despite all the evidence on both sides of the argument, and although every piece of evidence has to be questioned for accuracy and reliability, taking into account when it was written, and who by, the evidence points overwhelmingly to the fact that Oliver Cromwell was a villain. Not only in quantity, but also in content. On both sides of the argument, there are some pieces of evidence which are weaker than others, but the view that Cromwell was a hero doesn't have evidence which really makes you feel shocked (like when Cromwell used children as human shields). For this reason, how can such an evil man, a villain, a callous genocidal maniac have a statue of himself outside where, above all else, kindness and fairness is required. Cromwell isn't exactly a role model for how MPs today should act. So, to answer the original question: does Cromwell really deserve his statue, after all the terrible things he has done? No! I, before beginning this topic at school, knew of Oliver Cromwell in a good light, certainly not in a way where we should contemplate taking down a statue of him which has been there for over a century! But this has really opened my mind. Whilst you may not have started reading this letter with the same views as I have now, writing these few final words, I hope I have persuaded you, not necessarily to take drastic action and demolish a statue outside the Houses of Parliament (but perhaps I have, or maybe at least what I've written has made you consider doing something), but to reconsider how we think about him (or to reinforce your thoughts if you already had doubts about Oliver Cromwell).

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this letter.

Yours sincerely,

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Dear Mr Sadiq Khan,

This is Jessica Nguyen writing from Bexley Grammar school to discuss and inform you of my thoughts regarding the statue of Oliver Cromwell currently standing outside the Houses of Parliament; whether Oliver Cromwell deserved it or not, and if it should remain or not.

On one hand, the statue of Cromwell built in 1899 does indeed deserve to remain outside the Houses of Parliament. Oliver Cromwell was a very well respected man, and admittedly an excellent soldier and leader; this is suggested through the fact that he earned his right to his title, where he started off as part of the lower ranks of the gentry, and grew up as a farmer and minor landowner. Moreover, after the execution of Charles I, the position of King was offered to him, but he declined, stating that: "I did not call myself to be the ruler of England Ί I just tried to do right, for God and for the people." His statement implies that perhaps he truly did believe that what he did was the right choice for the people of England, and it would help to make England a better country. Additionally, a Puritan Baptist from Bristol in 1685 said that: "The days of Oliver were marvellous days of prosperity, freedom and peace." He also has a mural in Shankill Parade in Belfast in memory of his death, suggesting that he was greatly admired by many. Furthermore, during the Battle of Drogheda, Cromwell was fair, and offered them a chance to surrender, which suggests that he did not necessarily want to resort to violence.

However, on the other hand, the statue of Cromwell does not deserve to stand outside of the Houses of Parliament. As Oliver Cromwell was a strong, devout Puritan, he believed that everyone should follow the Puritan ways and changed the way people lived their lives- which was very unpopular

with the people. This started to show in the way Cromwell decided to run England. Cromwell frowned upon pointless entertainment, and shut and closed down many inns and theatres. Furthermore, most sports were banned, and boys caught playing football on a Sunday could be whipped as a punishment. Not only this, but Christmas: the day in which people rejoiced and enjoyed and celebrated a day with their loved ones was cancelled! If Cromwell truly wanted to do what was right for the people, wouldn't their happiness come first? Had he taken their feelings into consideration, perhaps things would not have ended the way they did: the people of England ended up disliking their new found leader. What's more, after he had executed Charles I, he dismissed Parliament, and dubbed himself 'Lord Protector' of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland; he was also the Commander of the New Model Army. Does he really deserve a statue of himself outside of the Houses of Parliament after officially dismissing Parliament, and deciding to run the country a completely different way without it? Another downfall of his was one of the most controversial events in Cromwell's life: The Battle of Drogheda. After the execution of Charles I, the Irish Catholics in Drogheda supported his son, Charles II. In an attempt to sort out the Irish, in 1649, 12,000 of Cromwell's soldiers sieged the walls protecting the town of Drogheda, and slaughtered around 3,500 Irish people, along with many survivors being sold into slavery and transported to Barbados. In a desperate attempt to try and control the town, Cromwell resorted to violence, which was definitely not the right choice. Also, the quote by the Puritan Baptist in 1685 that was stated earlier: "The days of Oliver were marvellous days of prosperity, freedom and peace." This only applied to Puritan followers, who had greater freedom under Cromwell.

In conclusion, I strongly believe that, although in the end, Cromwell was wrong in his ways of ruling, and there is a clear, vast gap in evidence between whether Cromwell deserved the statue or not; how he was wrong in his ways of ruling- no matter how you look at it- the statue ultimately deserves to stay. However, this is not to be mistaken in the fact that I supported the choices Cromwell made. I still am completely against what he did. Despite this fact, the events that have occurred have passed, he and his statue are a part of history, and removing the statue will do little to prove anything. Instead, people of the future generation should see it as a warning of what not to do, and learn from Cromwell's mistakes. If or when future leaders learn from his mistakes, then may England hope for a brighter future than the one Oliver Cromwell had created.

Yours sincerely,

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Early on Wednesday 8th February, 11 students, accompanied by Miss Brand and Mr Stewart, met at St Pancras to start their journey to France for an exchange trip. After getting the Eurostar to Paris, we had a quick stop at the Eiffel Tower for a picture before heading on the train once more to Orleans, where we spent the first evening with our host families.

Over the next two days we experienced French lessons, including the long days (8am to 6pm!) and the weirdly relaxing bell that confused us all very much. The evenings were spent bonding with our partners and their families, and exploring the local town. The cathedral of Orleans was particularly popular, considering that without planning we all ended up there! On Friday night the whole group went bowling, which was an excellent time to get to know other people and for people to show off their 'skills' (although some were questionable!)

On Saturday, there was another impromptu meeting at "Le Chateau du Chambord" which was a beautiful but cold castle in the region of Sologne. With its awe-inspiring towers and beautiful staircases, it was definitely one of the highlights of the trip. After spending our final evening with our families, we met back at the station the next morning to head home, but not before seeing Notre Dame and eating lunch at a traditional French crêperie.

It really was an amazing trip that allowed us to make some good friends, and immerse ourselves in French culture. We are all very excited to welcome our partners to England in a few weeks time.

Thank you to Miss Brand, Mr Stewart and Mademoiselle Guérin for organising such a good trip.

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The German Exchange this year was an interesting and fun experience for all involved and we can't wait to go to Germany at the start of the Easter Holidays. At the start of the week, we were all very nervous, not knowing how we'd get along with our partners, although our fears soon faded once we'd met our partners and had spoken to them for a short while.

We had several days where we brought our exchange partners to school, letting them see the way our school system differs from theirs, while helping to improve their already excellent conversational English and letting us all get to know each other better.

In the evenings we did several activities, highlights of which included going to see "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime", a play with incredible set and sound design and a fun round of bowling where we and our exchange partners got to compete with each other and have a lot of fun.

When we said goodbye at the station, it was a bit sad, but also very exciting as we knew we'd soon be going over to Germany to visit them and do similar fun activities, as well as improving our own German and knowledge of the German culture.

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Our Chinese lessons have not only been covering writing and speaking but our teacher, Miss Lu, has created fun and educational lessons where we learn about the culture, food and different sayings in Chinese such as 大吉大利'good luck' (da ji da li).

Most recently we celebrated the Chinese lantern festival; this is a special day symbolizing the Chinese New Year by organizing parades with very impressive floats decorated with lights depicting dragons and, this year especially, Roosters, with it being the year of the rooster.

In the lesson we started off with a fun pop quiz about the lantern festival. The questions were very difficult but we learned a lot. Then our teacher introduced us to some Chinese riddles where we had to find out which character it was describing, we then had a chance to come up with our own riddles and test our partners.

After we made up our riddles we wrote them on a piece of red paper and turned the paper into some pretty lanterns. Miss Lu then gave us four traditional sticky rice balls each which she told us was to symbolize the four seasons, or could be interpreted as wishing us luck all year round. The rice balls were gooey, sweet and delicious.

These lessons are not only fun but educational as they teach us the Chinese culture as well as the language, it helps us understand what may go on in someone else's life and lets us experience it. I enjoy these lessons and I hope that other language lessons will start to also explore the culture as well.

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On Thursday the 19th of January, the Junior Choir went to Young Voices 2017. It was at the O2. I'd never been there before, so it was quite an experience. I think I was one of the only people from Bexley Grammar who had never been there before. It was huge, both on the inside and the outside, and the number of other children there made it seem even bigger. We set off at 1 o'clock during lunchtime. We got on the coach, and there was an extremely excited atmosphere. When we arrived, we were escorted to the O2 by officials. Once inside the arena, we started rehearsing along with the other 7495 children. It sounded incredible! After the rehearsals, we had a well-deserved break and something to

eat. Then the break was over, and the parents started filing in. Once we were ready to perform, the lights went down and the concert started. We sang about 10 songs, but it wasn't just the singers: there were plenty of other performers, including world-champion beat boxers. The concert went well, but I was relieved to get home as it was so late! Thanks to all the teachers who came: we all had a great time!

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Our trip to Canada over the February half term was an amazing week. Although most days were -15 or less, we all thoroughly enjoyed it- not only the skiing but also the travelling, the evening activities and the shopping on the last day. One of the best evening activities was the ice hockey match, with great atmosphere and entertainment all the way though. This was a very different experience compared to U.K. Sports. Also the skiing was great, compared to skiing in Europe, there was no doubt we would run out of snow or of there being fresh snow on the slopes each day. All the instructors in both resorts seemed very friendly and always kept the skiing fun with new challenges as we went along. Overall it was a great trip and I would recommend it to anyone who has the chance to go in the future.

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The BGS ski trip to Canada was a big success. Despite the -20 degree weather and being served spaghetti bolognese for dinner 4 times, everyone seemed to have a good time. The snow in Canada was extremely soft and meant that when falling over there were no major bruises, which was particularly helpful for Mr Morgan when he made three dramatic falls in the enchanted forest. The hotel had a lot of facilities, including an outdoor jacuzzi and a sauna which were great at healing our sore muscles after a long day of skiing. On one evening we went to a local ice hockey game and enjoyed watching a few fights break out. However on the journey home from the match half the coach sang football chants the entire hour journey back.

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Okay, so, Peter Capaldi is leaving Doctor Who after the 2017 Christmas Special. Which means there's a vacancy. And whoever fills the role should be as different as possible to the predecessor. It has worked in the past, and it will work again. So, time to dredge up the oldest question out there: Should the Doctor be a woman?

In a word, yes. Yes it should. The basic outline for the doctor is as follows: impossibly old, witty, alien, energetic and intelligent. Nowhere in that does it say anything about the Doctor being a man. The Doctor has always been about challenging the archetypal hero, so what better way than with a woman? This way, women will see a strong role model of both intelligence and power, wit and charm, anger and compassion. The Doctor shows the whole range. In a world where 50 Shades of Grey is the fastest-selling book of all time, women and (especially) young girls need examples of strong, active, independent women.

Now, you may be thinking, what about the companions? Are they not good role models? Well, yes and no. Yes, they show more than a woman chasing love and romance, but she is, in most modern cases still defined by her relation to The Doctor. The two most prominent examples in modern times are those of Amy and Clara. Both of these characters are introduced by gimmicks, and that is the basis of their connection with the Doctor. Their personality and values are tacked on later. Give them an emotional speech every other episode, and they give the illusion of depth.

And while we're at it, putting a man in the companion's role would also be brilliant. This would show young boys a genuine, emotional, caring, funny man, outside of the usual masculine ideal synonymous with the likes of James Bond and most superheroes. It would be an amazing way to freshen the show for a new audience by keeping the roles the same, just swapping the gender of the actor who's playing them.

All this having been said, I do not want Chris Chibnall, the new showrunner, to pick gender over ability. The actor playing the Doctor needs to be good, great, if possible. So, my personal pick for a female Doctor is Tilda Swinton. She looks simultaneously youthful and ancient (two years younger than Mr Capaldi), she has versatility in her ability. She also has a slight ethereal quality to her voice, which would captivate audiences. With her at the helm of the TARDIS, the show would take a slightly stranger turn, but who's to say that would be a bad thing?

If the show wants to make the doctor more youthful, they couldn't go far wrong with Hayley Atwell. She has proved herself capable of taking on a physical lead role as Agent Carter in the Marvel series of the same name. She has a very distinct British poise and

elegance, which could lend itself well to a slightly eccentric, aristocratic Time Lady (which I wouldn't complain about at all). Add to this her current availability, she is another perfect candidate.

What I'm really trying to say is that the Doctor shouldn't be a woman for the sake of it. Yes, it's high time for the Doctor to be a woman, but for the love of Gallifrey, don't pick any old actress.

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On the 21st of January 2017, there was a worldwide protest that was aimed at Donald Trump immediately following his inauguration as President of the United States, due to his statements that were regarded as being anti-women and overtly offensive. The aim of the rallies was to advocate legislation and policies regarding human rights, women's rights, immigration reform, healthcare reform, the natural environment, LGBTQ+ rights, racial equality, freedom of religion, and workers' rights. This was the largest single-day demonstration in U.S. history since the Anti-Vietnam protests in the 1960's and it was named the 'Women's March on Washington'.

The organizers stated that the day was meant to "send a bold message to our new administration on their first day in office, and to the world that women's rights are human rights; the march went global due to it being streamed live on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. The Washington March drew in at least 500,000 people, but it is believed that the worldwide participant count was estimated at five million. In addition, there were 408 marches reported in the U.S. and 168 marches in 81 other countries. There were no arrests made in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, New York City, and Seattle due to them being peaceful protests.

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The Muse asked some of our current Y13 Peer Mentors for a few brief thoughts on what being a Peer Mentor has meant for them:

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Recently I've been making myself feel very stressed because it feels like time is moving too fast and the future's going to come around too quickly. We keep having to make these big, important decisions that are supposed to start leading us down our chosen career path and I have no idea what mine is going to be. All my friends have these great plans for their lives and these big ambitions and I'm still not sure what I want to do. It seems like unless you want to be a doctor or a lawyer there's nothing left for you and you're a disappointment. I'd really appreciate some advice.

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I know that this feeling is a problem faced by many of our older students in the school and first and foremost I want to assure you that

you are not alone. It may feel as though everyone else has it all figured out and that you're the only one left behind without a clue but trust me, those who have a set idea of what their future's going to look like are in the minority; there are even many adults still trying to work out what they really want to do. Based on this, my initial advice to you would be to relax, you don't need to have all your answers right now.

Next, I believe that the best thing for you to do would be to just make your decisions based on what you enjoy, don't necessarily focus on the end goal, but rather concentrate on the journey. When it comes to the time to choose the subjects you would like to take, whilst it is useful to think about what careers each of them could lead to, it is just as important to think about what your favourite subjects are and trust that the future will all fall into place; there is no point taking subjects you don't like in order to achieve some grand goal and ultimately feeling miserable the entire time. In the meantime, if you really feel it is a big concern, you could just start to do some research into your future choices and try to choose a combination of subjects that you like but which also keep your options open as far as is possible. Pick one of your favourite subjects, see what sorts of careers can stem from them and research aspects of these careers, such as: salary, necessary qualifications and how popular it is as a career choice – all just out of interest if nothing else. Finally, make sure to take the time to enjoy the present, especially when it seems that everything is moving by really fast. Take a day (or even just a few hours) to relax or go out with friends and let time slow down for a while, without worrying about your next deadline, or the next big decision you have to make. I hope this is helpful, and I wish you luck in the future. Just don't allow it to occupy your thoughts so much that it becomes your present.

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I had to write to ask your advice. Recently I've felt that I'm just taking on too much in terms of extra-curricular activities and responsibilities but I really enjoy everything that I do. I want to do it all but I'm so tired, and I'm finding it really hard to fit in time to do my homework in between everything. And what's more, even the things that I've considered I may have to sacrifice, I can't bring myself to leave because I don't want to disappoint the people (teachers for school clubs, and others for clubs external to school) who give up their time to run the clubs for us. What should I do?

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It's so good that you're someone who wants to throw themselves into everything and fill your time with activities but I understand that this can become very tiring and that sometimes you just want some time to sit down and be able to do nothing. First of all, I think it needs to be said that you shouldn't feel that you owe anyone anything and shouldn't stay doing something you don't want to do just for someone else. It's nice that you don't want to do anything that could hurt someone's feelings, but taking part in clubs

should be something that you do for you and nobody else. If you feel that you've taken on too much just explain this and they'll understand.

Secondly, I feel the best way to tackle your problem would be to try a find a balance between doing the things you want to do and doing the things you have to do. I don't believe that any student should allow their homework to completely rule their lives; however, that being said, it is a necessary evil and therefore has to have time allotted in order to get it done. I would say that, if there are clubs that you've considered that you could possibly give up then, for now, that may be the best decision for you (bearing in mind my earlier advice that you should not just continue with them simply because you do not want to let other people down). Perhaps, when you have more time, you could return to these clubs. I'm sure they would welcome you back and appreciate any support that you can give.

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Flowers by Ben Threader 7W

On the horizon, the sunrise puts out pink fingers into the jet black sky. I lift my head furled tight against the chill of the dawn, and sense my green stem stretch and pull. As the great, yellow sun reaches up into the sky, the temperature of the air rises until I feel its nurturing caress slide across me. My petals unfurl to let the warmth reach their surfaces – right into my heart. I am a rose, a glorious golden rose shaped like the sun itself.

A gentle breeze rolls across the field. Suddenly, the peace is cracked by a humming sound. A vehicle comes towards where I stand and two people emerge. They walk straight towards me, chattering and laughing without a worry in the world. I am aware of hard metal against my stem, pressure and then a feeling of release. I am not used to this movement, causing all of my body's gravity and roots to 'I wait 'I WHERE ARE MY ROOTS? I feel completely detached from the world. For a flower losing its roots is like losing its heart, happiness, and passion in an instant. Oh, how your life can change in the space of a few hours!

I don't recall clearly what happened next. I remember thinking where am I now? What horror is this? . Perhaps the brutal change in my circumstances chased away my ability to really understand, but I felt I was in a box with a lid that blocked out all the light. The box was in a noisy metal can which rocked and rolled from side to side like a boat in a tropical storm. The sounds were deafening with metal doors crashing like cymbals as the lorry hit the kerbs.

Gradually, I became conscious again. My head is hot and dry: my stem cold and slimy. I am crushed with others of my kind under a glowing tent which obscures my view of the sky. The space is packed with noisy people and a large sign which reads: "Chelsea Flower Show – Rose Category – Prize £100,000". Suddenly my heart is filled with all the joy and glory in the world. I am special and I am perfect. I will win this glorious prize!

But then I look down and spot the prize certificate has been given to another rose. An admiring crowd is gathered around and no one looks or cares about me. My dreams are crushed and I feel torn apart once again. As the luminous light in the tent fades and dusk falls a man walks through the space with a wheelbarrow, the front wheel squeaking through the quiet. The sound stops. He reaches out and grabs my stem and drops me unceremoniously into the barrow. The squeaking begins again as he pushes me away to a colossal and stinking pile of other flowers and plants. As he tips me onto the heap I feel all my life and soul drain away. Night falls.

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Aim and Fire by James Warren 7M

I wandered down towards my favourite cannon of the six that were there and clambered onto its barrel. This mighty old gun sat on a hill just above Sole Bay, a picturesque beach on the East coast. It had been there for as long as I could remember, I wondered when my cannon had last been fired...

As I looked out to sea, the tide was low and the air was salty; the smell of hops from the brewing of beer at the local brewery tickled my nose. The sun's warmth was beating down on me, the wind was whispering and the ocean was azure. But there was a cloud coming, a dark hazy cloud creeping in from the distance.

Suddenly, the sun went out like someone was turning out a light- the cloud was looming over, covering my eyes - it felt like all the happiness in the world had been sucked out. The elegant sea turned to a high tide, grumbling ominously; the calm ocean had become a choppy white water filled with galleons and vessels. The country's flag was flying high in the sky. The beacon was flaring and a vast number of men were running clutching muskets and cutlasses into the sea and out. An admiral, dressed in bright blue satin, drew his sword and commanded fire. I leapt off the barrel seconds before a flaming metal boule shot out with a noise worse than thunder! Cannon balls were flying uncontrollably, men were badly wounded. Ships were sinking into the water and the beach was turning into a pool of blood. The scene became horrifying. Bugles were calling, drums were rolling. The battle was in full flight.

With the naval battle raging on, I caught a glimpse of a stunning vessel, hand crafted with the finest oak-wood and hundreds of guns. On the horizon, another new ship bearing the tricolore flag appeared and shot a hole in the huge galleon. The mast fell and gracefully, the ship sank to the bottom of the crashing sea, the commander and his crew falling with it. Through all this destruction and horror, I hadn't noticed, the admiral ordering me to take aim at an enemy boat. I aimed and shot. The cannonball whooshed past like lightning and made a hole perfectly circular in the mast of an enemy ship.

Almost at once, the sun shone through the dark cloud and all the action began to fade away. The admiral, being the last to fade, saluted me; I saluted back showing respect to all those that had been lost that day.
The sea sparkled like crystals, laughing children ran in and out of the waves - I patted my cannon and joined them.

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LEAVING UNPREPARED by

Lauren Rees 7C

Fifteen minutes left.

Fifteen minutes to enjoy the freshness of the air; the movement of the animals; the freedom of the Earth. My heartbeat is rapid against my fragile chest. Thump. Thump.

I have known about this change for months, yet still it seems unexpected. I cannot cope

with the idea of abandoning all this pleasure for one stupid mistake, made by a person who had no sensitivity. I have no family to worry about - that is why I was chosen - and I will not miss anything when it happens other than the nature of our planet.

A beautiful sound fills my ears, the sound of birdsong above in the trees. As I listen my blood runs in time; my pulse is interlocked with the music. Around me nature is carrying on as normal, without any fear. To explain it to these creatures would be almost impossible.

If only that bomb was not let loose. If only that man had not been so careless. But that is how life works - when perfection is achieved somebody spoils it. That was how the fate of the world was decided, how now only few of us can be sent away. For this is all they had time to create: two spaceships and most of the world to die. That bomb in the ocean will not falter.

Soon I will leave this freshness and enter the oppressing rocket, a place to possibly spend the rest of my life. I inhale deeply, too much on my mind to dare try something new. As long as the horror continues this is my final farewell.

The space station is coming closer, and I slow down my pace. As I walk my last steps, the world is in slow motion, and the terrified people ahead are faded. For the truth beneath our Earth is too much to handle.

Carefully I begin to climb the cold bars of the ladder. Above the rocket looms and below the people roar. I cannot take it for much longer. Soon I may lose control.

The countdown floods my ears as I rush inside to the seating place and around me gather the other people to depart. Chosen from billions, I imagined mainly the world's rulers would have been on board, but there are others even worse off than me here. My mind is hauled back to focus as I hear our take off being announced. At once we are launched, and the place where we were brought up is slowly taken away.

I am alone once again in a tunnel of fear, plunging forever into misery. I am trapped inside my own heart, a place storing my unhappiness. Now I know what it is like to be injured; now I am no longer myself.

A rumbling explosion in the distance awakes me. Around me the air seems thick and dense, and the bond to my home is irreversibly shattered.

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Lonely Spirit by Lauren Rees 7C

In the misty skylight
Over fathomless black
My wings spread far apart
My legs bent far aback

Ready to take on the moon
Looping through all of its light
I crouch down low on my branch
And take off into the night

The wind seeps through my feathers
And quickens my beating heart
I am beside myself with excitement;
This is only the start

And soon she journeys with me
Sweeping the world of its woe
Winding me into her company
As if there is no tomorrow

Together our bodies twirl
Our tails glimmering ebony
We are always flying as one
Our path entangling endlessly

The wind is harmless behind us
Watching our grace in the silver cloud
Its gusts will not lose control
Not with our friendship so proud

A flicker of breeze then a surging gust
And all of my hope is torn
For even if we are together at heart
Our relationship has not been sworn

Then just in a moment I cannot hold on
And my wings can no longer sway
Clusters of dust blast into my eyes
And the murdering wind takes me away

Hopelessly thrashed from tree to tree
I bluster through heaps of wrecks
In search of the one in my dreams
Dreading what I may find next

But suddenly my glide gives way to the storm
And water envelopes my feathers
For now I am drowning down in the lake
All for one change of the weather

In the misty skylight
Over fathomless black
Wings spread far apart
Legs bend far aback

Ready to take on the moon
Looping through all of its light
I crouch down low on my branch
And take off into the night

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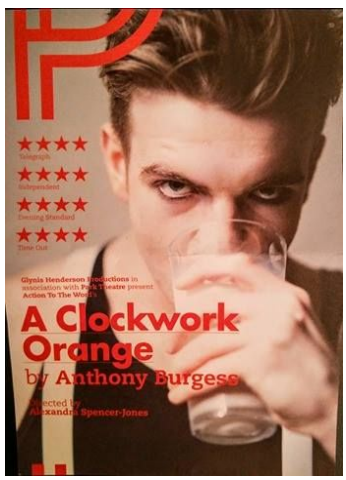
! *vzbu¯z¥u A¥Yxlf

On the 10th February, I went to see ***! *vzbu¯z¥u A¥Yxlf*** at The Broadway Theatre, directed by Alexandra Spencer-Jones. I'd seen the film and thought that overall this was not something that you went to see to enjoy but rather to experience. I mean this in the sense that, after seeing the film, I felt a great conflict and confusion in myself, not the sense of fulfillment that one might get after watching an Agatha Christie remake, where all the ends have been tied neatly into a silk bow. If you've ever seen Night Crawler, then I wouldn't hesitate to compare the feeling you get when the credits role at the end of that to the ones gained when leaving ***! *vzbu¯z¥u A¥Yxlf***.

Not recommended for the faint-hearted.



! *vzbu¯z¥u A¥Yxlf has vile themes of brutal, mindless violence; youth; corruption; politics; morality; and budding masculinity. The play follows the story of Alex, a

15 year old ne'er do well, who is leader of a small gang and who spends most of his time creating non stop violence or drinking milk laced with drugs. Eventually, he is caught for murder and sent to prison where he finds that he may be allowed to leave early if he takes part in an “experimental” treatment made especially to cure criminals of their transgressions. Soon enough he is again drugged up (just this time legally) and is now watching heinously violent videos. As the drugs take power he rapidly becomes “immune” to the sins of the world. Alex is cured...or is he? I recommend finding out for yourself whether the state succeeds in “saving” his soul or not.

The Action To the Word company explored these themes mainly through physical theatre which I thought was done incredibly; the fight scenes were all performed in dance form to music ranging from Beethoven (***¥fkf¥¥nxl dn¥fb¨v± ¨z ¨mf azzu***) to pop punk to techno and house. I found the way in which the company moved as an ensemble incredibly powerful, it was as if, at times, they breathed as one

organism; their movements were so well-timed and precisely planned that the line between dance and theatre steadily became blurred. As well as being stunned by the visuals, ***! *vzbu¯z¥u A¥Yxlf*** made you think a lot about your own self-made morals; Burgess puts the conundrum of whether condemning the criminally vile to an inability to act upon human behaviours (***¦©bm Y¦ ¦fvkÝdfkfxbf Yxd ¦f°ä*** is a better way to deal with them, than to, instead, incarcerate them and spend taxpayers money. The world in which Alex lives seems to believe that once you’ve committed such odious acts you should be exempted from the realm of natural human behaviours´l I highly recommend you go and see the play for yourself as it continues to tour across the UK, it truly is an experience to confuse, antagonise and intrigue you.

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By Ed Sheeran

Three years after his second studio album, ‘**U**’ (multiply), and one year after his self-imposed social media hiatus, Ed Sheeran is back with the third in his mathematical series, ‘ æ ’ (divide).

It definitely lives up to its name, with a broad variety in sound and mood, from the Irish undertones of ‘Galway Girl’, to the almost tribal accompaniment of ‘Bibia Be Ye Ye’. Rest assured, there is still the usual Ed Sheeran bittersweet ballad, ‘Happier’, and the witty, sarcastic upbeat number, ‘New Man’.

This album does seem to be one of dichotomies: the experimental and the traditional, upbeat and sad. But one place where they all unite is in the traditional Ed Sheeran catchiness. All the songs have simple melodies and repetitive lyrics, making all of them instant earworms. It is a rare achievement of an album that someone can have a new favourite song every time they listen, and that is certainly true for me.

It is also of no doubt that Ed Sheeran has an amazing ability with lyrics, and all his songs tell a distinct story. From the nostalgic look at his childhood of ‘Castle on the Hill’, to the loss